

Stand Up for Patient Safety

Methodist Healthcare takes great pride in its efforts to address and improve the safety and care of its patients. As part of this process, Methodist became a charter member in a nationwide initiative called "Stand Up for Patient Safety." This initiative is sponsored by the National Patient Safety Foundation and brings together leading hospitals and health systems from across the country to mobilize all hospital leaders to reduce errors and improve patient safety. The goal is to replace traditional barriers to patient safety with a new culture of accountability, trust, system improvement, and continuous learning.

Methodist constantly strives to provide the safest healthcare environment for its patients. Along with providing safe medical care, Methodist continually monitors its environment to ensure safety and security for patients and visitors. Also, Methodist is:

- Investing in new state-of-the-art health information technology that will reduce medical errors by improving how information moves between hospitals, departments, and doctors.

- Creating a new division called Care Management to improve quality and patient care processes.
- Working with the other providers in the University Medical Center Alliance to share ideas on how to deliver care better and more efficiently.

There are a number of things you can do to ensure your safety during a doctor visit or hospital stay.

Here are some tips on how to "Stand Up" for your safety:

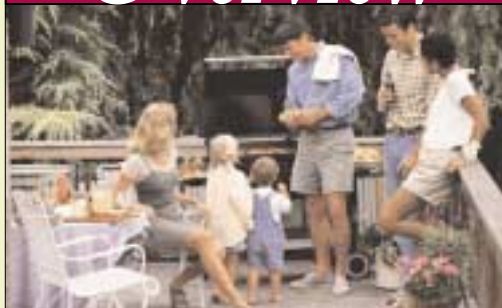
Talk with your doctors, nurses, and pharmacist. Ask questions about your care. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask—it is your right to get answers.

Ask a family member or friend to go with you to act as your advocate. It is easy to be overwhelmed by a lot of information, especially if you are ill. Your

continued on back



Overview



Summer's Here!

The beginning of summer usually indicates that schools are out, and for most of us that means lowering our protective guards. We want to have fun, while on the same token, make sure we observe basic rules for summer safety.

Throughout the year we can take a proactive role in making sure the health care needs of our families are being met, while still enjoying the benefits each season has to offer.

This issue of *HealthConnect* will provide you with some health pointers on how to remain safe and cool during the long, hot summer days ahead.

Who is on *Your* Health Care Team?

Choosing a Specialist

Individuals usually receive the majority of their personal health care from a primary care physician (PCP). However, circumstances arise where more specialized treatment is required. By definition, a PCP is a provider who manages an individual's personal health care for minor, uncomplicated illnesses and injuries, promotes wellness and detects health problems through education and screening, and coordinates specialist care and services. A specialist, on the other hand, is a physician with advanced education and training in a medical specialty.

A licensed physician can practice in any specialty, but those who are board certified have met certain requirements. A good specialist is an essential part of your health care team!

The American Board of Medical Specialties currently recognizes a number of specialties, including:

Allergy/Immunology	Ophthalmology
Anesthesiology	Orthopedics
Colon/Rectal Surgery	Otolaryngology
Dermatology	Pathology
Emergency Medicine	Pediatrics
Family Practice	Physiatry
Internal Medicine	Plastic Surgery
Medical Genetics	Preventive Medicine
Neurological Surgery	Psychiatry
Neurology	Surgery
Nuclear Medicine	Radiology
Obstetrics/Gynecology	Thoracic Surgery

You will find that choosing a specialist is very similar to choosing the right primary care physician. You want someone in whom you have confidence, someone who meets your requirements, and finally, someone who provides quality personal health care. To help you decide on the best medical specialist possible for your condition, please consider the following tips:

Prepare a list

If you are currently enrolled in the City of Memphis PPO or POS plan, you should already have a list of credentialed providers from which to choose. Contact the Benefit Administrator's Office at (901) 576-6761 if you need additional copies or if you are a current

"Choose a specialist similar to the right one"



employee with the City and you are interested in enrolling in the City's Health Benefit Plan. If you must perform an independent search, ask people you know well to give you recommendations for specialists in the area or your illness. You can also ask your PCP for a referral to a specialist.

Gather basic information about the specialist

This includes any licensure, credentials, board certification, and experience. This can be done for free by calling the American Board of Medical Specialists at 1-800-776-CERT. Also check for disciplinary actions.

Talk to the specialist before the visit

Before finally committing yourself to the final selection of your doctor, ask for a preliminary interview of 5 to 10 minutes. If the doctor refuses, it is probably not a good sign and you should consider removing him/her from your selection list. During the interview ask the specialist some of the same questions you asked when interviewing your PCP (see the spring issue of *HealthConnect*). Also ask questions that might have been raised during your review of professional credentials and whether he or she is appropriate to handle your particular medical concerns. Continue to interview specialists until you feel comfortable enough to make an informed decision on who should handle your health care concerns.

Talk to the specialist during the visit

Prepare your questions in writing ahead of time, including a list of your symptoms and concerns. Does the physician actually address your concerns? Don't hesitate to ask questions if you do not understand. Trust between doctor and patient is important to healing.

Get a second opinion

Even though specialists are board certified in a specialty area, no doctor can know all there is to know about treatment options, surgical procedures, or keep current on all the research. Most responsible physicians will readily recommend getting a second opinion.

You should be certain that you are seeing this Specialist because he or she is the best choice possible. The best tip that can be provided is for you to choose a specialist who makes decisions based solely on what is best for you as a patient.

Just for Retirees

Please Note: The Retirees' Health Fair Date has been changed to Thursday, August 7, 2003 at New Hickory Hill Community Center, 3919 Ridgeway Street from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Keeping Cool

Overheating occurs when people overexert themselves in very hot weather. Heat stroke takes place when the body's internal temperature rises high enough to damage itself. Although rare, heat stroke can cause imbalances in the body's electrolytes (or natural salts), shut down the kidneys, and cause shock or even death.

Among those at great risk for heat stroke are seniors, who are sensitive to heat and poor air quality. During very hot weather, it's important to be aware of the signs of a heat stroke. According to the American Red Cross, heat-related illnesses come in stages. At first, you may experience muscle cramps. Symptoms after that can include: moist pale skin, headache, dizziness, nausea.

More serious signs of heat stroke, such as vomiting or loss of consciousness, require immediate medical care.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that each year more people in the United States die from extreme heat exposure than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined.

To beat the heat, plan to stay indoors and, if possible, in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to a shopping mall, senior center, or public library. Even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cool when you go back into the heat. Call your local health department to see if there are any heat-relief shelters in your area.

Here are some other tips from CDC to help you keep cool on hot days:

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose clothing.
- Exercise indoors or schedule outdoor exercise in the early morning or early evening.
- Take cool showers or baths.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.





Kids' Corner

School's Out...Fun's In

Early summer means "school's out," and for many Americans, it can mean "fun in the sun!" Kids

of all ages will be out of school, adults will be on vacation, and people will be spending more time on the sidewalks, streets, parks, and playgrounds of our communities. However, while summer is synonymous with fun, it can also present some health risks for your children.

In order to help make your child's summer a safe and fun one, we would like to provide you with some summer safety tips:

Water Safety

- Never leave children unattended in or near water.
- Teach your child how to swim.
- Explain pool and water safety
- No diving should be allowed in shallow areas
- Never let your child swim during a lightning storm

Bike Safety

- Make sure children wear a helmet that fits properly
- Check the bike to make sure the breaks, reflectors, and tires are working
- Adjust the seat to your child's height

- Explain the rules of the road to your child
- Never allow your child to wear headphones while riding; headphones will block traffic sounds

Scooter/Skateboard/Skating Safety

- Make sure your child has the proper protective gear — a helmet, wrist guards, and elbow and knee pads
- Teach your child to stay away from cars and other vehicles and to ride only on the sidewalk or paved off road paths
- Make sure your child rides during the daytime only
- Never allow your child to wear headphones while riding; headphones will block traffic sounds

Sun Safety

- Use sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15 or higher, and apply to your child 20 minutes prior to sun exposure
- When possible, dress your child in light-colored fabrics that cover exposed areas
- Make sure your child drinks plenty of water
- Try to avoid midday sun when the sun's rays are the most intense
- Encourage your child to wear a hat and sunglasses

What's Driving You?

That dreaded day has finally arrived; your bubbly teen has come home with his or her learner's permit, and now you have a whole new set of worries. How do you

keep your beloved child safe once he or she gets behind the steering wheel?

Here are a few tips on teen driving safety:

- Don't count on driver education training
- Plan practice sessions
- Don't let your teen drive late at night
- Restrict the number of passengers in your teen's car
- Choose a safe vehicle for your teen
- Require that your teen wear a seatbelt
- Talk to your teen about avoiding drinking and drug use, especially when driving
- Set a good example with your own driving

The ABCs of OTCs and Allergies

For most people the four seasons are winter, spring, summer, and fall. But for people with allergies, there are really only two seasons: Sneezing and Not Sneezing.

If you have sneezing, runny nose, or watery eyes due to allergies, chances are you've looked over the medicines available at your local grocery or drug store. The good news is that there are medications available without a prescription. But that's also the bad news—with so many options, how do you choose? Here's a simple guide to help you find the right over-the-counter (OTC) medicine for allergy relief.

The two major classes of OTCs for allergies are antihistamines and decongestants.

Antihistamines help relieve sneezing, itching and runny nose. Antihistamines block the affect of histamine, a substance that the body makes during an allergic reaction. They work best if you take them routinely during the allergy season rather than waiting until you feel miserable.

Most antihistamines cause few side effects. Some people do become drowsy. Children may be nervous, restless and irritable after taking an antihistamine.

Long-acting, 8- to 12-hour antihistamines give longer relief and can help you get through the night with fewer allergy symptoms. For faster relief, try a 4-hour antihistamine, which will begin working more quickly.

Decongestants come as topical eye and nose drops and sprays or as oral tablets and liquid. Decongestants narrow the blood vessels and reduce blood flow in the affected area, which helps clear congestion and improve breathing.



Nose drops and sprays should be used for no more than three days to avoid rebound swelling in the nose. Congestion increases and can become difficult to treat.

Decongestants relieve stuffy nose and drainage, but do little or nothing for itching and sneezing. Because the drugs can interact with some other medications, consult your doctor before taking them with other medications.

Antihistamine/decongestant combinations are best for nasal and eye allergies. The combination products may also reduce your chances of becoming drowsy.

If your allergy symptoms persist even with OTC medication use, call your

doctor to discuss these problems and how to manage them.

Tips for OTC Medication Use

- Do not drive or use machinery that requires mental alertness when you first take antihistamines. They often cause drowsiness.
- Check with your doctor before taking OTC medications with other prescription drugs. They may interact.
- Do not use out-of-date medication. Check the expiration date on the label. If out of date, flush the medication down the toilet.
- Do not keep medication in the bathroom. The supply will keep its full strength longer when stored in a cool, dry spot with no direct light.
- Avoid storing the product in temperatures that are very hot or very cold.
- Keep all medication away from children.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians,
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

City of Memphis
Office of the Benefits
Administrator
Room 1B-38
125 N. Main St.
Memphis, TN 38103



City of Memphis health

Connect

Stand Up for Patient Safety

continued from front

advocate can help by understanding your diagnosis and asking questions for you.

The more you know, the better your care will be.

Use the Internet, library, and support groups to learn about your condition, treatments, and choices. Ask for a second opinion if you have any doubts or concerns about your care.

If possible, write down the following information and bring it with you when you seek medical treatment: Your medical history, including special conditions; immunizations and vaccinations; all medications, including herbal and dietary supplements and over-the-counter drugs; allergies and sensitivities; names and numbers of all your doctors, clinics, and pharmacy.

In the hospital you can help ensure your safety: Ask everyone—caregivers and visitors—to wash their hands. Ask people to identify themselves when

they come into your room. Before you go in for a procedure, ask to make sure they have the right patient and are doing the correct procedure. Make sure you have the correct medication in the correct dose; Report anything unusual to your doctor.



Be sure you understand your discharge instructions before you leave the hospital or clinic. A doctor or nurse will review with you the name of any medication you are prescribed, the amount, how often you will take the medication, and any additional instructions that you should follow. Repeat all the instructions to make sure you understand; get a number you can call if you have

questions; and be sure that you can clearly read and understand written information.

Join Methodist and “Stand Up for Patient Safety.” For more information, go to the Methodist Healthcare Web site at www.methodisthealth.org or visit the National Patient Safety Foundation at www.npsf.org